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Book Review of *Laud Humphreys: Prophet of Homosexuality and Sociology* by John F. Galliher, Wayne H. Brekhus, and David P. Keys

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Laud Humphreys: Prophet of Homosexuality and Sociology. By John F. Galliher, Wayne H. Brekhus, and David P. Keys. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004. ix + 214 pp. Photographs, appendixes, references, index. \$18.95 paper.

As an undergraduate sociology major, the only thing I learned about Oklahoman Laud Humphreys's classic, *Tearoom Trade* (1970) was how it violated standards of informed consent in social science research. As Galliher, Brekhus, and Keys recount in their biography, *Laud Humphreys: Prophet of Homosexuality and Sociology*, sociology graduate student Laud Humphreys needed to supplement his (quite likely, participant) observational research of men who had sex in public bathrooms (i.e., tearooms) in St. Louis in the mid-1960s with a formal questionnaire. Knowing that these men would never agree if they knew they were selected because of their participation in highly stigmatized and criminal behavior, Humphreys recorded their license plates, got their home addresses, and interviewed them as part of a "community health survey." Herein lies the deception and the major source of the controversy. What I didn't fully appreciate when I was a student, however, and what the authors so deftly illuminate is the importance of this work not only for debates around ethical issues of social science research, but more importantly, perhaps, for the study of sexuality, deviance, and urban life.

Through careful scrutiny of the debates in the aftermath of *Tearoom Trade*, the authors complicate the "ethical issues" debate. By no means do they exonerate Humphreys. They simply note the methodological complications of observing stigmatized behaviors in their "natural" settings and stress the need to weigh the ethical issues involved in light of "the possible benefits of this investigation, the possible risks, and demonstrated harms. . . ." In this regard, they quite bravely call for an examination of the practices of Institutional Review Boards "that make research on sexual behavior especially difficult."

In the absence of these boards, Humphreys was able to conduct fieldwork that has informed sociological research in the areas of sexuality, ethnography, and urban sociology. *Tearoom Trade* demonstrated the differences between homosexual practices and homosexual identities, now a staple of queer theory. It identified the subtle rules of social interaction that establish privacy in public settings and imbue physical space with sociological meaning, now a staple of urban sociology and the new social geography. It confronted the many consequences of social stigma and

helped carve out a niche for activist research which continues to have a marginal position in mainstream social science.

Consequently, *Laud Humphreys* is also about marginality and mainstream social science. Humphreys did his graduate work at Washington University in St. Louis when the sociology department was strong, radical, and not very well liked by the administration. His research and his feud with a senior faculty member led to his sanctioning by the university and their withdrawal of a job offer. These experiences set the stage for a lifetime of marginalization in the academy for the topics he studied, how he studied them, and his political activism. Humphreys's civil rights and antiwar protests got him arrested and thrown in jail. He was also the subject of an FBI file reproduced in one of the book's appendixes. As the authors note, Humphreys was punished, and this punishment served to enforce the "symbolic and moral boundaries in sociology and in academia as a whole."

For all the richness of *Tearoom Trade*, the concept that Humphreys kept returning to was "the breastplate of righteousness," the phrase he used to describe many of the men he encountered in the bathrooms of St. Louis: "a protective shield of super propriety" worn by the deviant and intended to deflect the shame and project it onto others. In our current climate of religious fundamentalism and debates about a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, it is time for all of us to revisit Humphreys's life, his activist scholarship, and the breastplate of righteousness. **Stephen Valocchi**, *Department of Sociology, Trinity College, Hartford*.